
CHAPTER 2

DETERMINING WORKLOAD AND STAFFING NEEDS

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Introduction

Determining a district's workload needed to accomplish their objectives and responsibilities is the first step in establishing a sound personnel management system. The accurate determination of staffing needs is indispensable to a progressive district program.

Timing

An analysis of workload and staffing needs should be part of each district's annual work plan. Each update of a district's long-range plan should include a consideration of anticipated staffing needs. Information pamphlets on developing annual and long-range plans are available from the NACD Service Center.

Coordination

All annual plans, objectives and staffing decisions should be communicated to the State Conservation Commission (SCC), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and other agencies that provide employees or services to the district. Staffing a district office with adequate personnel is always a challenge for the district, NRCS and other agencies. Coordination with these agencies is essential to minimize problems that may be encountered. Such problems include: duplication of effort, gaps in expertise, imbalance in program demands and services, and uncertainty of roles and responsibilities.

Who Should be Involved?

An analysis of workload and staffing needs should be a joint effort by the district board, district employees, agencies serving the district and others that might provide information. The district board, following consideration of information and counsel provided by district and cooperating agency employees, should establish priorities.

Process

To determine workload and staffing needs, the following steps are recommended:

1. Review district responsibilities.
2. Determine the anticipated workload in terms of staff days required by reviewing the district's annual and comprehensive plans.
3. Determine the number of staff days currently available.
4. Compare the figures obtained in steps 1 and 2, to arrive at the number of staff days needed or in excess.

Workload Analysis

All the current, anticipated and projected activities of a

district should be analyzed in terms of required staff days. Activities that should be covered, relating to program administration, include: personnel and financial management, public participation, information and education activities, and liaisons with local, state and federal agencies. Activities relating to making surveys and inventories, and assistance with planning, installing and maintaining conservation measures, best management practices, streambank erosion control projects, etc. should also be covered. Exhibit 2.2 of this chapter lists some of the documents available to districts that include estimates of staff days for activities.

The analysis should be made first without regard to the available work force. It should be based on what is needed and should reflect the total job to be accomplished by a district. Priorities can later be set to fit the district's yearly objectives to the realities of the staff and other resources that are available.

An example of a completed workload analysis is included in this chapter as Exhibit 2.4. The blank worksheet (Exhibit 2.3), can be used to list district activities and the staff days required to perform these activities.

Determining Staffing Needs

After the workload analysis has been completed, the number of staff days available to the district should be determined. All sources should be listed, including district officials, district employees, NRCS employees, civic groups, volunteers and others.

By subtracting the number of staff days that are available from the number of staff days obtained from the workload analysis, the district can arrive at the number of staff days needed. This can be converted to the number of full-time positions needed by dividing the figures by 260 days, minus holiday and leave time. This calculation may also determine that current staffing is adequate.

An example of a completed Staffing Needs Worksheet is included in this chapter as Exhibit 2.6. Exhibit 2.5 can be used to list staff days available. It is easily adapted to fit each district's particular needs.

What These Figures Provide

The figures obtained by following the stated process will indicate only the number of staff days of full-time positions that are needed. It will not show the types of people to hire, such as engineers or soil conservationists, nor will it reveal whether or not the available staff is being used efficiently. These important determinations must be made by analysis of work reports, position descriptions, and workload needs. A compilation of the staffing needs from each district in the state is an excellent tool for districts, state conservation agencies and state associations when working with local government and state legislatures on supporting funding requests.

Setting Priorities

The staffing needs worksheet may reveal there is more work to be done than resources to do it. It is at this point that a district must set priorities.

When completing a workload analysis it is important for the district to also consider state imposed priorities and the impact of USDA activities on the district's program. A properly completed workload analysis will help determine which areas of work to concentrate money and people. It can also help determine which areas of work should be discontinued.

A district may find it necessary to abandon projects or programs that are not productive, even though considerable investment has been made. If funds and personnel are limited, this is important for effective management. It should also be recognized some activities considered important may never be accomplished. Decisions should be based on the public benefit gained for the cost. Resources should not be spread so thin that no area receives adequate attention.

One way of setting priorities is to identify the activity or group of activities that should be carried out if resources were limited to only one activity or group. This then becomes priority number one. Other activities are then identified in the same manner until all activities have been placed in priority order.

Following are items to be considered when establishing priorities:

1. What can be done to make the greatest impact on the conservation and wise use of the soil, water and related resources of the district?
2. What new and more efficient ways can be found to do the job?
3. What is being done that does not solve the problems or that works against solving the problems?
4. What projects are being duplicated else-where or could be done better by others?
5. Will additional funds and/or people be necessary, and will they be available?
6. Is the contemplated activity consistent with the district's long-range program?
7. What will be the consequences if the activity is not continued or completed?
8. Does the activity in consideration complement other activities, or is it counter productive?

Setting priorities will help determine what positions the district should try to fill. Further analysis of progress reports, time reports, existing position descriptions and available funds may help provide the final answers.

For example, in Exhibit 2.6, the staffing needs worksheet developed by the Happy County Conservation District indicates that an additional full-time position is needed in both the clerical and technical areas. Funds have become available to hire one full-time employee. A decision must be made as to which position to fill. Reviewing the Workload Analysis Worksheet and position descriptions of the available staff indicates a need to accelerate the application of planned conservation measures in the Long Branch Watershed. This has been established as a top priority item in the long-range plan of the Happy County Conservation District, but funds have been lacking. The district board's decision is to hire a full-time conservation technician to work exclusively in the Long Branch Watershed.

Few situations are as simple as the one above. Other issues complicate decisions, but following this process will help minimize the problems of determining how many and what positions to fill.

Benefits

Completing a workload analysis and staffing needs inventory produces the following benefits:

1. District supervisors can better understand the district workload and the scope and severity of the district's resource problems.
2. It provides a document from which future plans can be made.
3. It provides a basis from which funding re-quests can be made and supported.
4. It provides information to base future personnel management decisions.
5. It promotes efficient use of the available work force.
6. It becomes a foundation for a sound personnel management system.
7. It provides an unbiased format to determine when to decrease staff due to workload and/or funding decreases.

What Positions to Fill

EXHIBIT 2.1 CHECKLIST FOR DEVELOPING A WORKLOAD ANALYSIS

ITEM	COMPLETED
1. Assign responsibility for district workload analysis to an existing district committee. If no appropriate committee exists, form a special committee.	_____
2. Meet with the NRCS District Conservationist, the State Conservation Commission field personnel, district employees, and list all current and anticipated district activities. This list should include all activities in which the district is involved even though NRCS may be providing all the technical assistance for the activity.	_____
3. List activities in order of district priority.	_____
4. Based on actual resources and staff available to carry out activities, make recommendations as to which activities should be maintained and which should be eliminated if necessary.	_____
5. Make recommendations on present and future levels of staffing needed to carry out district programs.	_____

EXHIBIT 2.2 WORKLOAD DATA

SOURCE	AVAILABLE FROM	SUBJECT
America's Conservation Districts Workload Analysis Survey March 1990	NACD	State-by-state survey of technical assistance needed to carry out a balanced resource protection program
National Resources Inventory	NRCS	Land and water areas, land use and conservation treatment needs
Statewide Section 319 Plans	Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Division of Environment	Non-point pollution area by land use; pollutant category; treatment needs in terms of funds and personnel
RCA Worksheet Data	NRCS	Resource concerns and problems, program development, impact of technology and conservation treatment costs and benefits
River Basin Studies	NRCS	Water and related land resources, problems and opportunities
Record of District Accomplishments & NRCS Time and Progress Reports	NRCS & District Files	Accomplishments
Other State Resource Agencies		Forestry Programs Wildlife Programs Wetlands Programs

EXHIBIT 2.3 WORKLOAD ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

		*STAFF DAYS		
ACTIVITY		ADMINISTRATIVE	TECHNICAL	CLERICAL
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				
21				
22				
23				
24				
25				
TOTALS				

* 260 staff days equal one work year

EXHIBIT 2.4 EXAMPLE WORKLOAD ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

2000Happy County Conservation District Workload Analysis Worksheet

		*STAFF DAYS		
ACTIVITY		ADMINISTRATIVE	TECHNICAL	CLERICAL
1	Annual Work Plan Development	5	5	1
2	Office Administration	80	-	100
3	Developing Conservation Plans	-	150	10
4	Design of Conservation Practices	-	380	13
5	Construction Site Inspection	25	250	8
6	Soil Stewardship Observance	4	-	1
7	Review of Subdivision Plans	6	25	3
8	RC&D Application	12	3	5
9	Agency Coordination with:			
10	Farm Services Agency	2	-	1
11	State Conservation Commission	4	1	2
12	KS State Extension & Forestry	2	1	1
13	Natural Resources Conservation	5	2	2
14	KS Dept of Health & Environment	1	1	1
15	KS Dept of Wildlife & Parks	2	1	1
16	Information (Schools)	18	2	2
17	Tree Sales	4	-	2
18	District Conservation Tour	3	1	4
19				
20				
21				
22				
23				
24				
25				
TOTALS		173	822	157

*260 staff days equal one work year

*Available staff days = 260 staff days minus holidays and leave time

EXHIBIT 2.5 STAFFING NEEDS AVAILABILITY WORKSHEET

		ADMINISTRATIVE	TECHNICAL	CLERICAL
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				
TOTALS				

EXHIBIT 2.6 EXAMPLE STAFFING NEEDS AVAILABILITY WORKSHEET

2000 Happy County Conservation District Staffing Needs Availability Worksheet

		ADMINISTRATIV	TECHNICAL	CLERICAL
A. STAFF DAYS AVAILABLE				
1	District Board Members **	9	-	-
2	District Technician	13	175	-
3	District Manager	13	-	144
4	NRCS District Conservationist	6	140	-
5	NRCS Soil Conservation Technician	-	200	-
6	NRCS Conservation Aide	-	62	-
7	Volunteer	-	140	-
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				
TOTALS		41	717	144
B. Staff days needed (from Exhibit 2.4)		173	822	157
C. Difference + or - *		-132	-105	-13

* Available work year staff days equal one work year

** Does not include board meetings